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Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

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S E C R E T ROME 11518

NODIS CHEROKEE

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR VOLPE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, IT
SUBJ: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT LEONE

1. I MET WITH PRESIDENT LEONE AT 11:00 THIS MORNING AND HE WAS EXTREMELY KIND AS USUAL, HAVING CANCELLEDA DENTAL APPOINTMENT TO SEE ME. I HAD NO SOONER STARTED MY PRESENTATION WHEN HE HELD UP A XEROX COPY OF A COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER, HEADLINES OF WHICH REPORTED JIMMY CARTER SAYING THAT THERE WOULD BE NO PARTICULARLY DRAMATIC EFFECT ON ITALY OR ITS RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. IF THE COMMUNISTS WERE IN THE GOVERNMENT. THIS WAS ALSO CARRIED ON TELEVISION LAST NIGHT. HE FELT THAT THIS WAS PARTICULARLY DAMAGING AT THE MOMENT WHEN THE DC IS TRYING TO COPE WITH THE TREMENDOUS THRUST OF THE COMMUNISTS FOR PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT. LEONE SAID HE TOLD BERLINGUER THAT THIS IS SIMPLY NOT IN THE CARDS.

2. IN INDICATED TO HIM THAT I WAS NOT THERE AS HIS FRIEND -- AND WE ARE FRIENDS --; I WAS NOT THERE REPRESENTING MY GOVERNMENT, WHICH I DO, BUT RATHER AS AN EMISSARY AND VALUED PERSONAL FRIEND OF THE PRESIDENT BRINGING THE BEST WISHES OF BOTH THE PRESIDENT AND YOURSELF.

3. I REPORTED THAT YOU WERE BOTH VERY PLEASED THAT THE DC HAD REMAINED THE PARTY OF THE RELATIVE MAJORITY AND THAT THE LEFT HAD NOT GAINED 51 PERCENT OF THE VOTE. HOWEVER, THE
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PRESIDENT WANTED ME TO TELL HIM HOW IMPORTANT HE CONSIDERS

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THIS MOMENT NOT ONLY FOR ITALY BUT FOR EACH OF US IN THE
ALLIANCE AS WELL AS THE EEC. URGENT ACTION IS NEEDED TO RE-
VITALIZE ITALY IN THIS CRUCIAL TIME, AND A GOVERNMENT CAPABLE
OF DOING JUST THAT MUST BE FORMED.

4. LEONE ADMITTED THAT THIS WAS ALL TRUE BUT POINTED OUT
THAT THE JOB OF FORMING A GOVERNMENT WAS GOING TO BE EVEN
MORE DIFFICULT NOW THAN BEFORE THE ELECTIONS, DESPITE THE
STRONG SHOWING OF THE D.C. OBVIOUSLY, THE COMMUNISTS
ALSO GAINED SUBSTANTIALLY WHILE THE SOCIALISTS AND OTHER
DEMOCRATIC PARTIES LOST OR DID NOT GAIN. THE SOCIALISTS
ARE IN GREAT DISARRAY. (DEMARTINO HAS JUST BEEN REMOVED
AND CRAXI HAS SUCCEEDED HIM). IT WILL BE ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE
TO GET THE SOCIALISTS INTO ANY FORM OF GOVERNMENT, PERHAPS
UNTIL THE END OF THE YEAR. WITH THE SMALL PARTIES STILL
STINGING FROM THEIR LOSSES, WHICH THEY BLAME ON THE DC,
IT MAY BE NECESSARY TO FORM A SINGLE PARTY GOVERNMENT, WITH
THE ABSTENTIONS PERHAPS ON THE PART OF ALL THE OTHER PARTIES.
LEONE GAVE ANDREOTTI VERY HIGH MARKS FOR NEGOTIATION AND
TACT AND FELT THAT IF ANYONE COULD FORM A GOVERNMENT IS WOULD
CERTAINLY BE HE.

5. HE INDICATED TO ME THAT ANDROTTI THIS MORNING IS
STARTING HIS ROUND OF INDIVIDUAL CONSULTATIONS WITH THE VARIOUS
PARTIES, A PROCESS WHICH WILL PROBABLY TAKE AT LEAST THREE
OR FOUR DAYS. BOTH LEONE AND ANDREOTTI ARE COMPLETELY
COMMITTED TO REJUVENATING AND STRENGTHENING THE BASE OF THE
DC PARTY. HE RECOGNIZES THAT THE SUBSTANTIAL VOTE FOR THE
PCI REFLECTED A DEEP DISTRUST OF THE ITALIANS WITH THE
PERFORMANCE OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTIES AND UNFORTUNATELY,
HE ADDED, THAT MANY ITALIANS BELIEVE THE COMMUNISTS
WHEN THEY SAY THEY WILL ADHERE TO DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES
AND TO ITALY'S ATLANTIC AND EUROPEAN COMMITMENTS. HE INDICA-
TED THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT DID NOT AND WOULD NOT TAKE A
CHANCE ON THIS "SUPPORT" AND WOULD NOT OFFER A ROLE IN THE
GOVERNMENT TO THE COMMUNISTS.

6. LEONE TOLD ME THAT HE HAD DISCUSSED WITH ANDREOTTI
THE FORUMULATION OF PROGRAMS AND THEY BOTH AGREED THAT THE
DC SHOULD DEVELOP PROGRAMS WITH SUCH PARTIES AS MAY BE
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IN THE COALITION, THEN LAY THEM OUT BEFORE THE PUBLIC AND
THE PCI. IF ANY CONSTRUCTIVE SUGGESTIONS WERE RECEIVED,
THEY MIGHT BE ACCEPTED. IF THE SUGGESTIONS WERE NOT IN THE
BEST INTERESTS OF ITALY, THEY WOULD BE REJECTED. THE PUBLIC
IN THIS WAY WOULD KNOW WHO THE CULPRITS WERE.

7. WHEN I QUESTIONED HIM, HE INDICATED THAT HE HAS ALREADY
TALKED WITH ANDREOTTI ABOUT ADDITIONAL NEW FACES IN THE

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GOVERNMENT AND THEY PLANNED TO INCLUDE TECHNICAL PEOPLE, MABE EVEN SOME OF THE FIRST TERMERS. IN THIS WAY LEONE BELIEVES THE PUBLIC WOULD SEE THAT THE PARTY WAS FULFILLING ITS CAMPAIGN PROMISE.

8. TIME DID NOT PERMIT ME TO GO INTO SOME OF THE DETAILS OF THE NEW PLAN FOR ACTION, BUT I WAS ABLE TO TOUCH QUICKLY ON THE HIGHLIGHTS AND HE AGREED THAT THEY REPRESENTED AN ESSENTIAL MINIMUM IF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT IS TO SURVIVE.

9. LEONE EMPHASIZED THAT BOTH HE AND ANDRREOTTI APPRECIATE THE GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION AND THE NEED FOR EFFECTIVE, IMMEDIATE ACTION, BUT REITERATED THAT IT MIGHT HAVE TO BE A DC GOVERNMENT ALONE WITHOUT ANY PARTNER AT LEAST UNTIL THE FALL.

10. I TOLD HIM THAT NEITHER THE PRESIDENT NOR THE SECRETARY COULD OR WOULD BLESS ANYTHING THAT GAVE ADDITIONAL RESPONSI-BILITY TO THE PCI AND THAT THE DEGREE TO WHICH WE AND -- WE BELIEVE -- OUR PARTNERS MIGHT TAKE STEPS TO PROVIDE EFFECTIVE AND COMPREHENSIVE ASSISTANCE TO ITALY, WOULD DEPEND TO A GREAT DEGREE ON HOW THE DC HANDLED ITSELF DURING THE DAYS AND WEEKS AHEAD.

11. LEONE CONCLUDED BY ASKING ME TO CONVEY HIS BEST REGARDS TO THE PRESIDENT AND TO YOU.VOLPE

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